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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 001649

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/29/2012

TAGS: PHUM CU IT UNHRC

SUBJECT: (C) ITALY: LUKEWARM SUPPORT FOR PROJECT VARELA

REF: A. SECSTATE 55698

1B. SECSTATE 49534

CLASSIFIED BY: POL MC TCOUNTRYMAN FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

11. (U) POLOFF DELIVERED REF A DEMARCHE MARCH 26 TO
CONFIDENTIAL

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AMBASSADOR NICCOLO' GORETTI DE FLAMINI, MFA OFFICE DIRECTOR
FOR CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN. GORETTI IS A FORMER
AMBASSADOR TO NICARAGUA.

12. (C) ACCORDING TO GORETTI, THE GOI WAS IN FAVOR OF THE
VARELA PROJECT AND WAS FOLLOWING IT CLOSELY. THE GOI HAD
INFORMATION THAT THE GOC WOULD HAMPER THE PROJECT BUT WOULD
WAIT TO SEE WHAT HAPPENED. HE WOULD FAX OUR DEMARCHE TO
THEIR AMBASSADOR TO CUBA. THEIR DCM IN HAVANA MET FREQUENTLY
WITH DISSIDENTS AND WOULD SUPPORT THIS PROJECT IN THOSE
MEETINGS.

13. (C) GORETTI NOTED THAT SOME CUBAN DISSIDENTS OPPOSED
PROJECT VARELA. THEY DID NOT BELIEVE THE GOC WOULD EVER
ALLOW A REFERENDUM.

14. (C) ASKED WHETHER THE GOI WOULD SUPPORT A RESOLUTION IN
THE UN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (UNCHR) ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN
CUBA (REF B), GORETTI SAID THE GOI WOULD HAVE TO SEE THE TEXT
AND COORDINATE WITHIN THE EU. PROBABLY THE GOI WOULD VOTE IN
FAVOR OF SUCH A RESOLUTION BUT WOULD NOT COSPONSOR IT. ITALY
WOULD BE LIKELY TO ABSTAIN ONLY IF THE TEXT MADE FAVORABLE
MENTION OF THE AMERICAN EMBARGO, WHICH THE GOI OPPOSES. A
BRITISH DEMARCHE ON THE SAME SUBJECT HAD SUGGESTED THAT THE
EU TAKE A LOW PROFILE BUT VOTE IN FAVOR OF A RESOLUTION. THE
GOI AND HMG PREFERRED THAT THE EMBARGO NOT BE MENTIONED IN A
RESOLUTION, BUT SOME "EU GOVERNMENTS ON THE LEFT" DISAGREED
AND, HE IMPLIED, WERE SEEKING TO INSERT A NEGATIVE REFERENCE
TO THE EMBARGO.

15. (C) COMMENT: GORETTI'S PROFESSION OF SUPPORT FOR
CONFIDENTIAL

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PROJECT VARELA APPEARED PERFUNCTORY, AND HE REPEATEDLY DODGED
POLOFF'S REQUEST FOR THE ITALIAN EMBASSY TO PUBLICLY ANNOUNCE
SUPPORT FOR THE PROJECT AND TO URGE THE GOC TO ALLOW THE
PROJECT TO CONTINUE. HE SEEMED MORE EAGER TO TAKE POT SHOTS
AT U.S. POLICY, WHICH HE SAID WAS BASED ON U.S. DOMESTIC
POLITICS. END COMMENT.
SEMBLER

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